

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE AIMS AND METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN
LANGUAGES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WHICH COULD BE
APPLIED TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN IRAN

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INTRODUCTION

For a number of years there was universal accord on the method of teaching foreign languages. Although they had numerous disadvantages, the two world wars in the present century contributed to the general understanding of the importance of communication between various nations and brought about a feeling that a great deficiency existed in the instruction of foreign languages. One consequence of this universal feeling was that greater emphasis was placed on teaching foreign languages in schools all over the world. This has led to the creation of a new field of research in which hundreds of capable investigators are involved. The foundation for research was laid on firm grounds, and new principles are based on the fundamentals already universally accepted. Thus many problems involved in the teaching of foreign languages has been solved with a reasonable degree of accuracy and general satisfaction. Various methods have been applied and the effectiveness of each has been observed and compared with effectiveness of other methods.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Determining the relative merits of various methods still remains the main problem in language teaching, and these merits were the principal topics of the present report. In addition, consideration was given to the aims for which a foreign language may be taught and the application of a certain method to obtain a specific result. Finally, the problem of applicability of these methods in Iran was given attention.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Here are the main purposes of this study:

1. To investigate new aims and methods of teaching foreign languages in English-speaking schools;
2. To explain the present aims and methods of teaching foreign languages in Iran;
3. To determine how new aims and methods could be adapted to teaching English as a foreign language in the schools of Iran.

THE AIMS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRIOR TO THE 1940'S

The Purpose of Teaching Foreign Languages

The traditional objectives and methods of teaching foreign languages were quite different from the present-day objectives and scientific methods. In the early 1920's, reports of the Modern Foreign Language study tended to emphasize strongly reading attainment. Holzworth said that the attainment of the ability to read a foreign language was the aim to be stressed above all others.¹ According to De Sauze, Professor Coleman believed that "...the most important aim of language teaching is to secure a reading ability that would remain a joy and lasting influence in life. It can be claimed that here in

¹Charles H. Holzworth, "Publication of the Modern Foreign Language," Modern Language Journal, November, 1929, 3:89-92.

the United States, writing, speaking, and understanding, while valuable assets, are to a certain degree secondary in importance to, and concomitants of, the skill to read."¹

Conversation, which is the practical use of a language, was not even considered a main objective until recent years. The classroom effort was centered primarily on developing the ability to understand the language through the eye and the ear, because the goal was to read the language directly; therefore, more reading had to be done. In 1959, Trace revealed this fact in the following statement:

There is no mistaking the fact that a revolution is now underway in the teaching of foreign languages in American schools and colleges. The trend is sharply away from the traditional emphasis upon reading and toward the "oral - aural," or some prefer, the audio - lingual approach in which the chief emphasis is upon conversation.²

Writing. Prior to the 1940's writing was strongly emphasized. Since the aim of teaching foreign languages was the attainment of the reading ability, and reading was impossible without knowing the writing, reading had to begin with the alphabet. The teacher would find a letter in the student's mother tongue which would correspond in sound to the particular letter he was to present. Students were urged to realize this correspondence as a first step in learning the language. The next step was to search in a textbook for a word which would clearly show the resemblance of sounds. The first homework

¹ E. B. DeSautze, "The Problem of Teaching in French Classes," French Review, March, 1930, 3:313.

² Arthur S. Trace, Jr., "The New Look in Foreign Language Instruction," Modern Foreign Journal, December, 1959, 43:382.

required that each letter be written several times. In addition to regular penmanship practices, several hours were devoted to dictation. Since dictation had been used in grammar school for teaching children correct English, it was believed that it would be an aid in the teaching of a foreign language also.

Dictation exercise came at the first of the hour once or twice a week.¹ Below are a number of recommendations made by Farhan for improving dictation.

.....

2. Dictate a short paragraph or portion of the current lesson. The best results are obtained from dictation exercises when the teacher begins with very easy and familiar materials and works gradually to the more difficult and unfamiliar.
3. Dictate from the text prepared some days before.
4. Dictate from some easy text which the pupil has never seen.
5. Dictate from a more difficult unseen passage.
6. Dictate a short synopsis of a whole lesson.
7. Dictate questions on the text, during first half of period, devoting the last to answering them and having them read.²

Dictation was to form part of the teaching lesson. In the first year the exact sentences as they appeared in the lesson studied at home were to be the subject of dictation. Later, it was to cover the whole lesson through a résumé of the reading assignment prepared by the teacher.

Reading. Reading followed writing with the text used as the main reference. The whole period was devoted to the teacher reading from the text. Sentences were translated word by word, and the

¹ Annetta Betz, "The Foundation of Dictation in the Teaching of Modern Languages," Modern Language Journal, October 1917, 2:150-6.

² C. Evangeline Farhan, "Devices for Classroom Procedure," Modern Language Journal, November 1917, 2:75.

students were required to memorize the meanings of the individual words. There was no conversation conducted in the foreign language classes, but the students were required to speak the language being studied. Meras reported that the teacher's French or German was seldom heard in the classroom for anything except isolated words, sometimes for correction or question, and yet the pupils were expected to be able to express themselves correctly.¹

Words played in important part in the reading process. They were treated as symbols of the foreign languages and were learned independently, with no emphasis on their relative position in the sentence of which they were a part. The study of the languages was primarily a great and glorious study of words; therefore building a vocabulary formed a part of the regular work. The suggested method by Meras for vocabulary building was to select a list of thirty or forty important words and idioms of the lesson, write them on the board and require pupils to memorize them.² All this was aimed at improving the reading ability.

It was not realized that reading, if interrupted too often, would prevent the reader from appreciating shades of meaning, beauty of form, and the esthetic value of the text read. Such being the case, words could be used only under specific circumstances. Under a slightly different situation, pupils had to pause to evaluate each word which could possibly be used, relate it to other words, and check the validity of the grammatical relationship between them.

¹Albert A. Meras, "Possibilities in a Reading Lesson," Modern Language Journal, October 1916, 1:10-17.

²Loc. cit.

Grammar. There was a widespread belief that ability to read was dependent largely upon the mastery of the essentials of grammar. Learning grammar was therefore deemed absolutely necessary in order to understand the structure of a language and to express oneself correctly. In fact there was ample evidence to show that teachers relied chiefly on pupils' attainment in grammar to evaluate their achievement in the language. Osmond criticized this point when he said that in French classes much time was spent on grammar. The rules and paradigms were memorized by the pupils. When they came to apply the information thus obtained, it frequently happened that they forgot the most essential and therefore wrote nonsense.¹

Many hours were devoted to grammar and the result was often disappointing. Tenses were explained, then a list of circumstances under which they were supposed to be used. Verbs were conjugated in different tenses with emphasis on number and gender. Nouns, pronouns, and other parts of speech were classified under categories according to their types, function, and applications. Students were given a number of sentences in which nouns had to be replaced by appropriate pronouns. In some cases a number of nouns were written on the board, and the students were required to write correct definite articles before them.

Translation. Before the 1940's separate hours were devoted to translation. A lesson was assigned for careful translation of the harder and the more important passages. It was believed that translation

¹Robert T. Osmond, "Lead Them Not Into Temptation," French Review, May, 1929, 2:511-22.

into a foreign language was of the greatest usefulness in developing the intelligence of pupils and that it was an exercise which could be made to contribute to their knowledge of foreign languages. In some cases two or three pupils were sent to the board to translate a small portion of medium difficulty from the text. Homework in translation consisted of unfamiliar sentences in both native and foreign language to be translated for next period, when they were read aloud by the pupils and corrected by the teacher.

THE AIMS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THIS COUNTRY SINCE 1940'S

Reasons for Changing the Aims

World War II brought sharply into focus the lack of foreign language skill on the part of many native Americans. The experiences of the war revealed the weaknesses of the language program in this country. Many young men overseas, who had taken language in schools, realized their language handicaps. Never before had they felt the need for a language skill. Never before had they developed an interest in learning a language. The lack of ability to comprehend and communicate with the natives overseas became evident.

Educators and critics in this country were deeply concerned about the Americans' lack of knowledge in foreign languages. According to Zech, the story of German parachutists who came down in Holland equipped not only with uniforms but with a command of the Dutch language, and the German motorists who swept across Belgium and France spreading disorder and panic in a fluent French gave additional evidence to American people, which they could not afford to disregard. Gradually the people of this

country realized that languages play an important role in the many theaters of war.¹ As Del stated, "Victory goes to the side that is better prepared; preparation not necessary in the term of military or mechanical, but in restricted sense of the term, cultural."²

In 1944 Professor Ounger said:

With the transition from isolationism to internationalism, which the war has brought so quickly and which the American people have now accepted, and with the world leadership that our country assumes, the study of foreign languages in our schools and colleges must be vastly extended and carried to a degree of mastery unapproached in the past.³

Rowe reported that the United States Government and the United States Army were the first to realize that securing peace and world leadership would be impossible without having men conversant in different languages.⁴ The Army established its own school and started teaching foreign languages with a new aim and method not similar to the previous methods. The emphasis was put on speaking and understanding the foreign language.

The Aims of Teaching Foreign Languages

World War II brought a great change in the objectives and methods of teaching foreign languages in this country. Before World War II the main objectives were reading and writing a foreign language.

¹Adolph Zech, "Appraisal and Presentation of an Intensive Course in German," Modern Language Journal, January 1945, 20:18-25.

²Mario A. Del, "Languages for Defence," French Review, December 1941, 15:109.

³Professor Henri C. Ounger, "What Others Think of Us," Modern Language Journal, November 1944, 20:10.

⁴Benjamin Rowe, "The Army Streamliner Language Instruction," Modern Language Journal, February 1942, 29:136.

Seldom was the attention of educators focused on speaking and understanding; but war made Americans conscious of the need for teaching students to understand and speak the language. Zech reported that this need came when the armed forces were in need of thousands of men who could speak French or German and other languages. Men with previous language training were tested and found wanting. Up rose critics to blame language departments. Students who had studied a language for years, these critics said, were unable to speak it.¹ Criticism brought about a shift in emphasis. When the Army established foreign language classes for men in service, the objective according to Rowe was:

....to be able to speak fluently, accurately, and with an acceptable approximation to native pronunciation and a practically auditory comprehension of the language as spoken by natives.²

The experiment of the Army Language Program was accepted by language departments in order to fulfill the needs of language students. Reading and writing were not the main objectives. Speaking and understanding were the new aims in language instruction.

Jespersion said that a language should be learned through sensible communication; there should be connection in the thoughts communicated in new language. Learning a language would be impossible by memorizing a list of words.³

¹Adolph Zech, "Appraisal and Presentation of an Intensive Course in German," Modern Language Journal, January 1945, 29:18-25.

²Benjamin Rowe, "The Army Streamliner Language Instruction," Modern Language Journal, February 1942, 29:136.

³Otto Jespersen, How to Teach a Foreign Language, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947.

It is almost impossible to believe that the war could be the main element responsible for changing objectives and the methods of foreign language program, but Kaulfer revealed this when he said:

If the war has had any importance, recognizable influence on the linguistic objectives of modern foreign language teaching, the impetus has probably been in the direction of a revival of interest in the aural - oral use of the language.¹

Not everybody accepted the new objectives. The following is the list of the most important objectives in teaching modern languages, selected through a questionnaire to 103 foreign language teachers in Colorado high schools. These objectives, in order of their importance, were (1) Pronunciation, (2) oral comprehension, (3) fluency in speech, (4) knowledge of vocabulary, (5) reading comprehension, (6) knowledge of grammar, (7) ability to translate, (8) written composition.²

On the whole, linguists and educators have put greater emphasis on the new fourfold objectives which according to Huebener are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.³

These fourfold objectives are now accepted because many teachers believe that students should learn a language in the way an infant learns its mother tongue. The sequence of the learning process for an infant does not begin with reading and writing. But according to Babcock:

¹Walter V. Kaulfer, "Instrumental Grammar for Conversation," Modern Language Journal, February, 1945, 29:99.

²Harry J. Mrachek, "Foreign Languages in the Colorado High Schools," Modern Language Journal, March, 1961, 45:130-3.

³Theodore Huebener, Audio-Visual Techniques in Teaching Foreign Languages, New York University Press, 1960, pp. 63-65.

The new accepted sequence of steps in learning a foreign language is hearing and understanding, speaking, and writing familiar materials. This is after all, the natural method of learning any language.¹

Some have gone further and have eliminated completely the previous objectives for beginning students. Rosental, who strongly supported the new objectives, explained that in his opinion all instruction in the first few years should be from the listening-speaking point of view. There would be no writing or reading. Fluency in the spoken language would be the aim of the program.²

THE NEW METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THIS COUNTRY

The Use of Audio-Visual Materials

Audio-visual materials have come to play a prominent role in the teaching process as an aid in the presentation of knowledge, concepts, and objects in such a way that they are more clearly and easily understood and appreciated.

According to the Encyclopedia Americana, a new stage in the development of audio-visual instruction in this country is the product of the shock of Russia's accomplishments in science, technology and education. These achievements became known to the public when Sputnik I blazed in the sky. The shortcoming in American education appeared to be critical. The federal government organized various committees and commissions to cope with the problem.³

¹Chester D. Babcock, Helen M. Kwapił, "Audio-Visual Aids in Teaching Foreign Languages," National Elementary Principal, May, 1960, 39:17.

²L. P. Rosental, "Foreign Language With the Emphasis on the Audio-Visual Techniques," Grade Teacher, June, 1961, 78:57-8.

³The Encyclopedia Americana, 1961, pp. 535-535h.

Many educators believe that the effectiveness of audio-visual materials in teaching is indispensable. Hubener said that audio-visual materials contribute to the efficiency, depth, and variety of learning. By appealing to several senses, they make learning more permanent. Finally their esthetic character makes learning pleasant and enjoyable.¹

Audio-visual materials are especially useful in teaching foreign languages, because the teacher of foreign languages is faced with one of the most difficult problems in the entire field of education, that of teaching in an artificial set-up. The ideal way of learning a language is to study in the country in which that language is spoken. Since taking classes into the foreign country is impossible, the next best thing would be to bring the atmosphere of the country into the classroom as accurately as possible. Is it possible for language teachers to use audio-visual materials and create a semi-natural environment in their classes? The answer could be found in a report of the Conference on the Effective Utilization of A-V Materials in College Teaching.² At this conference it was pointed out that a semi-natural environment is possible in foreign language classes by using audio-visual materials. They are valuable in presenting cultural materials, and are useful tools in understanding people whose customs, ideals, and cultures are different from Americans.

Pictures. A prominent role in present-day foreign language teaching can be played by pictures. The teacher wants his students to remember

¹Theodore Hubener, Audio-Visual Techniques in Teaching Foreign Languages, New York: New York University Press, 1960, pp. 45-50.

²Conference on the Effective Utilization of Audio-Visual Materials in College Teaching, Audio-Visual Education (Report on Conference held at Stephens College), 1951, pp. 5-10.

words and expressions which enable them to express their thoughts in the foreign language. So he employs pictures in his class.

An author of a book may introduce a picture to supplement his discussion to ensure that something not easily explained in words will be understood by a reader. A teacher uses a picture to clarify his verbalism and to enrich meaning. Verbal abstraction can be translated into sharply defined visual pictures, and the teacher of foreign language is not forced to use the student's mother tongue to correct mistaken impression.

The beginning students are required to recognize particular objects in the picture and call them by name. In intermediate classes students are required to determine details in a picture and describe what is seen; but for advanced students of foreign language the use of pictures is quite different. These students are supposed to draw inferences regarding past, present, or future action of the people or object shown, and to make personal interpretations based on individual backgrounds. In this way the foreign language will be used more often and translation will not be necessary.

Slides. In the teaching about the civilization and culture of a country slides are indispensable. Nothing can vivify the text or the teacher's verbal description better than excellent slides. Slides can be used effectively as a basis for conversation. Slides will arouse curiosity and interest and induce in students the desire to know more about the subject. Modern education stresses the importance of sustained interest as one of the prominent factors in successful learning. According to Muller, slides are able to sustain interest. He explained in this way that a slide of Jean d'Arc in shining armor leading the

French army, for instance, is able to arouse the students' curiosity and awaken in them the desire to learn more about the French heroine. The students are more apt to listen closely to the oral presentation of this chapter of history taught in the foreign language.¹

A beautiful picture on the screen, when a word or expression is introduced, will make an impression upon the students' memories, lasting much longer than mere association of words, because it establishes a mental connection between the picture and the word. Huebener reported that students choose one or several slides to study and a brief paragraph is written by the pupils for each slide. The teacher goes over the notes, makes corrections, and hears students give their talks. On the day of the lesson each student proceeds to speak as his slide appears on the screen.²

Cartoons. Cartoons are used chiefly in the conversation class. They do not teach about foreign culture, as a slide does; they do not give information as a picture does; but they inspire students in the conversation class. In most cases, as Sinnema explained, if the teacher asks students to carry on a conversation, they are frequently uninspired, become embarrassed, and usually fail to respond satisfactorily. This failure is often due to the lack of ideas. Cartoons can be used as supplementary devices to guide students in a descriptive, narrative, or conversational sequence.³

¹Theodore Muller, "An Audio-Visual Approach to Modern Language Teaching," Modern Language Journal, May, 1955, 33:237-8.

²Theodore Huebener, Audio-Visual Techniques in Teaching Foreign Languages, New York, New York University Press, 1960, pp. 44-45.

³J. H. Sinnema, "Cartoon in Conversation Classes," Modern Language Journal, March, 1957, 41:124-5.

Sinnema¹ reported that newspaper comic strips are particularly valuable for class use. Usually newspaper cartoon strips are collected until the subject matter and vocabulary needed to describe the strip are those of a lesson studied in the textbook. An important value of the use of the newspaper cartoon is that the student finds to his delight that he can express in the foreign language those things which he discusses in his mother tongue. Since the newspaper comic strip is not connected to the text, he gains confidence that his ability to speak the foreign language has reached beyond the textbook. He finds fewer gaps in his command of the foreign language than he had previously believed existed.

Tape-recorder. The audio-lingual approach to language teaching requires enough exposure to the foreign language to assure a fair degree of fluency in the oral aspects of the language, as well as reading or writing. This makes it of prime importance to use native voices for the presentation and drill. Since it is almost impossible to have a native speaking teacher, recorded materials assume a vital role. The use of a recording is the best aid for both aural and oral training in foreign languages. The recording can and should be used at all levels of language study. Since they can use so many voices, intonations, accents, and speeches they will be of great benefit for foreign language teachers and students.

Haydon believed that the taped words not only give exact pronunciation but also sentence rhythm and intonation. It repeats the native's way of using the language.²

¹J. H. Sinnema, "Cartoon in Conversation Classes," Modern Language Journal, March, 1957, 41:124-5.

²G. E. Haydon, "Aural-Oral Techniques in the Teaching of Foreign Languages," Hispania, December, 1956, 39:468-9.

Huebener said that if the language teacher does not have sufficient fluency to conduct the lesson in the class, by the help of the tape recorder he will be able to attract the students' attention to accurate pronunciation of the words and intonation of the language. If the teacher is fluent he can record his own speech and provide permanent reference to a model of the same quality as he presents daily to his students.¹

In 1951 a conference was held at Stephens College concerning effective utilization of audio-visual materials in college teaching. At this conference, the tape-recorder was reported to be an extremely valuable device in making students aware of their errors in pronunciation and intonation.²

The use of a tape recorder in language classes is simple. Usually the lesson from the text is taped with a space left between sentences for repetition. The questions are also taped with the space between them to allow students to repeat questions and answer them. In this way students hear the correct pronunciation and imitate it; then by repeating several times they get the correct pronunciation.

Sometimes a student reads a passage and records his own voice. Then he listens to his pronunciation, and the pronunciation of the master voice which has been recorded on the same tape. He imitates and records the new sound simultaneously, then replays to himself the master voice again. By repeating this procedure several times, he gets an

¹Theodore Huebener, Audio-Visual Techniques in Teaching Foreign Languages, New York: New York University Press, 1960, pp. 46-51.

²Conference on the Effective Utilization of Audio-Visual Materials in College Teaching, Audio-Visual Education. (Report on Conference held at Stephens College), 1951, pp. 10-13.

opportunity to compare his pronunciation of the new strange sounds with that of the master. This method of teaching foreign languages puts much emphasis on pronunciation.

Films. Instruction of foreign languages by means of films is a widely used technique. Motion pictures provide a vast range of materials for conversation. They make possible a more vivid presentation than the textbook. They are the most effective aid in instruction of foreign languages.

Previtali¹ reported that if teachers of foreign languages use motion pictures in their classes, the students will see the materials and will hear facts about those materials at the same time. This presentation will bring the real life and the color of the foreign country to the students. Teaching techniques are based on the same principle as that which governs a young child's learning of his own language. A child sees the object, hears the oral expression for it, associates the sound with the image. He hears to understand; he also learns to speak by repeating what he has heard and understood. The same principle could be applied to older children and adults, but with a difference. The older the person, the less is the ease with which he masters a second language. The reason is that, as children advance in years, they become more and more used to the speech pattern of their mother tongue. Acquiring such rigidity in their speaking habits makes it more difficult for them to master the strange new pattern of the foreign language. Still a person of any age overcomes this difficulty, to a great degree,

¹Giovanni Previtali, "Foreign Language by Motion Picture," Modern Language Journal, April, 1960, 44:171-6.

when he learns the language in a foreign country. This is to say, he is obliged to learn it as a child does. It sounds almost impossible, but many experiments have proved its practicability.

Instead of trying to learn the language in class from a textbook, how much more interesting it would be for the student to acquire it while actually participating in the daily life in the foreign country itself. Since the sound film can produce the illusion of living in another land, it can be put to work to create the real atmosphere.

An experiment which was carried on by the University of Texas in 1958 showed that motion pictures are able to teach students a foreign language in an easy way, and they are more effective than the textbook. About forty students were trained to understand and speak Spanish by an oral approach, using motion pictures before they began to read and write. Their books were taken from them for eight weeks and during this time they learned Spanish entirely by ear. They heard, understood, and spoke it as children do before they can read or write. At the end of the eight weeks, the books were returned to the students. In the remaining eight weeks of semester they read the same Spanish they had already learned to understand and speak. In this way they read the whole book in less than half the time required by the other classes. At the end of the semester these forty students took the same test given to the other classes and surpassed their fellow students in both reading and writing.¹ Of course, though motion pictures have numerous advantages, a teacher will not achieve his goals if he does not know what to expect from a particular

¹Giovanni Previlati, "Foreign Language by Motion Picture," Modern Language Journal, April, 1960, 44:171-6.

film. According to Lottmann,¹ a teacher's objective and method must be precise. The different procedure of teaching still must proceed toward a specific end. The teacher must know what skill or knowledge can be taught by a particular film. He should see the film before showing it to the class. The short sentences should be spoken at slightly slower than normal speed, with pauses between sentences long enough for the students to absorb what has been said. The vocabulary should be checked; if the vocabulary is already studied, the teacher should have a short review; if they are unfamiliar words, the teacher should give the meaning of the words before showing the film. The peculiarities of pronunciation, and particular items which are seen in foreign countries, should be mentioned beforehand. This introduction can create a receptive mood on the part of the student and can set the direction for observation and discussion. After the films have been shown once or twice, the students are required to describe what they have understood. The description should be in short and simple sentences. A written assignment is found helpful. If the teacher finds out that specific parts of the film are not understood completely by the students, showing the film once more will be of great benefit.

Television. Television is being used ever-increasingly, not as a supplement to the classroom teaching, but as a direct means of teaching foreign languages. Learning a language seemed to be a paradox for Muller,² who said that learning a language and a skill calls for active

¹Anna Lottmann, "Films in Foreign Language Classes," Modern Language Journal, April, 1961, 45:178-81.

²Theodore Muller, "French by Television-The Teacher and the Machine," French Review, December, 1961, 35:185-90.

participation while students remain passive in television instruction. Learning takes place only when the learner engages in the desirable behavior of speaking the foreign language. Yet we see that television is used for instruction of languages. One reason for this could be found in the statistical data prepared by Administrators of French Review. The increasing number of the students is the most obvious reason for using television in teaching foreign languages. In one case a Foreign Language Department increased by one hundred thirty-six per cent in student population with less than twenty-five per cent increase in staff. It was hoped that the television set could increase efficiency of the teacher and cope with the flood of students. The second reason for the use of television in language instruction is that it was thought that televising could improve instruction of foreign language. Television could better present the material to be learned.¹

If the teacher of a foreign language course is a native speaker of that language, he will bring the ideal pronunciation into the language class. All students in the class will have opportunity to see the lips of the teacher, which is frequently of great help in imitating the sound.

Huebener stated that the teacher in the classroom is less visible to students than the televised teacher on the screen. Most of the time the programs are prepared by native speakers and talented Americans present the specific skills of language. This kind of televised program is especially of great value for language fluency on the part of the students who are situated in certain sections of this country in which language

¹Theodore Muller, "French by Television-The Teacher and the Machine," French Review, December 1961, 35:185-90.

teachers do not have fluency. The televised presentation of foreign language, especially in this case, supplements the teacher's skill.¹

Educational television programs are being executed throughout the country with astonishing results. Babcock explained that the Seattle Public Schools experimented with an aural comprehension test in Spanish for third graders. The purpose of this experiment was to determine the vocabulary understanding acquired by students who did not have access to television viewing. More than eleven hundred forty students were given the test. It was found that the members taught by a combination of classroom teaching and television, had an average of 3.00 errors on the whole test. Those taught by the classroom teacher without aid of television made an average of 6.3 errors and those who were taught by television alone with no follow-up by the classroom teacher averaged 7.2 errors.²

In Denver, Colorado, Spanish and French languages are offered on alternate days with the classroom teacher conducting review and practice on the intervening days. Then at seven o'clock the same evening the Spanish and French lessons are repeated again. By this arrangement the students have an opportunity to review what they had learned before.³

Martin reported that one highly successful experiment has taken place in Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota. The program was sponsored by seven counties. The objective of this course was to teach

¹Theodore Huebener, Audio-Visual Techniques in Teaching, New York: New York University Press, 1960, pp. 97-108.

²Charles D. Babcock, "Audio-Visual Aids in Teaching Foreign Languages," National Elementary Principal, May, 1960, 39:16-19.

³Arthur R. Olson, "Learning Foreign Languages by TV," National Elementary Principles, May, 1960, 39:20-21.

basic Spanish. The method which was adopted was the direct method, or as it was called "a give and take" oral relationship between students and the teacher. It involved mastery of a basic vocabulary and the speech pattern through repeated association and repetition over a whole school year of thirty-eight weeks, five days a week, one-half hour a day. The television program was seen by the students as well as the homeroom teacher who learned along with the children and led them into oral responses during the telecast. The homeroom teacher helped the students with the written materials which were an integral part of the course. The written materials were reviewed periodically by the television instructor who followed up his telecast with unannounced visits to the schools. The response and the performance of the students and the observation of the homeroom teacher gave him a good idea of the results being attained.¹

The Language Laboratories. Learning a language is a skill acquired through a retention of certain physical and mental processes. This skill, already possessed by a native speaker, is attainable through carefully controlled imitation. The greater the exposure to the second language the faster its mastery. The language laboratory provides exposure to the second language for the students in a language atmosphere.

Hoching and Merchant reported that the primary purpose of the language laboratory is to multiply the aural-oral practice of the students, especially in the beginning classes in order to accomplish the accepted

¹M. C. Martin, "Spanish Conversation on TV," Overview, June 1960, 1:34.

principles that foreign language skills should be acquired in the sequence of aural understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.¹

The language laboratory was brought about, according to Eichholz, by the demands of World War II, the results obtained by the Army language teaching program, and by the development of electronic audio equipment.²

The language laboratory supplements the regular class work. It provides opportunities for the extra time necessary for practice in conversation, drill in pronunciation, and phonetic training. The language laboratory develops the ability to recognize enough of the speech sounds of the foreign tongue so that the students can listen to a normal, simple conversation and understand it.

Concerning the language laboratory or electronic classroom, Desbery said:

When there is no native speaker teacher available, the best place in a school in which to learn a second language becomes not the traditional grammar translation classroom, but the electronic room.³

Fulton reported that in the language laboratory emphasis is placed upon teaching the students to hear. The beginners in the language laboratory must be trained to develop their sense of hearing to such a degree that they become proficient in listening. The reason for this is that listening is the basis of both comprehension and speech.⁴

¹Ellon Hocking and Robert C. Merchant, "The Fabulous Labs," Educational Screen and Audio-Visual Guide, April 1959, 38:184-7.

²Erich Eichholz, "Function and Equipment of a Language Lab," Modern Language Journal, April 1953, 37:181-4.

³Dan Desbery, "Automaticity: Language Learning Goal," Educational Screen and Audio-Visual Guide, April 1961, 40:173.

⁴Renee J. Fulton, "Language Labs Develops the Listening Ear," Modern Language Journal, May 1959, 43:224-25.

Cioffaris supported the above-mentioned fact about language laboratory when he said:

Each language utilizes only a fraction of the total number of sounds available to the human voice. Some of the sounds are parallel in the native and the target language, but others are either completely different, or so different as to be misleading. The language laboratory singles out these meaningful sounds and provides the necessary practice to perfect each one until confusion is eliminated.¹

The Department of Modern Language of the University of Oklahoma has had its language laboratory in operation since 1948. The following procedure is based on experience in the use of a language laboratory. The instruction of language should be a never-ending task for teachers throughout the first year, if they are to teach students proper pronunciation and intonation. The daily lesson should be recorded and should contain both vocabulary and grammar. The recording should be done with necessary attention on pronunciation. The sentences of a lesson can be recorded by a student; then he should play them back individually and compare them with the master recording. When the student believes that he has mastered the reading assignments, he records the lesson and turns it over to his teacher for grading and correction. This can be done in a conference with the student. The student's recording should be made a part of the regular class assignment. To this assignment the grammar and vocabulary of the particular lesson can be added. Straight listening to recordings without any other written assignments or objectives does not have much value.

¹Vincenzo Cioffaris, "What Can we Expect From the Language Lab," Modern Language Journal, July 1961, 45:4.

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN IRAN PRIOR TO 1950'S

The Ministry of Education, which is responsible for the educational function of all schools in Iran, requires students to take a foreign language for a period of six years, beginning with the seventh grade and to pass certain examinations in three distinct aspects of the language, namely writing, reading, and translation. This requirement sets the purpose for teaching foreign languages. The reading attainment was the ultimate goal of teaching foreign languages in Iran prior to the 1950's and is the main purpose of teaching foreign languages at present time.

Writing

Prior to the 1950's, the first step in teaching foreign languages was to introduce the alphabet to students and to teach them different sounds of the letters. Although the Persian language is from the family of Indo-European languages, the alphabet is Arabic and there is no similarity between the Arabic and Latin alphabets. Many hours were devoted to writing the alphabet and learning sounds of each individual letter. When students were able to write the whole alphabet correctly and recite it with no mistake in their sounds, they were given isolated words or simple sentences to write several times.

Dictation was considered the best device for teaching writing. Usually the text was the main source for dictation. The first part of each class period was spent on dictating from the text a lesson which students were supposed to learn; and then the rest of the period was devoted to the correction. Many hours in language classes in the first

year were spent on dictation. The same situation existed in this country prior to the 1940's. Farhan reported that dictation occupied many hours in language classes.¹

Reading

Mastery vocabulary in foreign language classes was the basic element prior to the 1950's, and it was only by slowly and carefully building up vital words in the foreign language that teachers of language in Iran equipped their pupils for ready mastery. Words were memorized regardless of the different meanings that they might have in different parts of a sentence. The text was read and translated word by word. A series of words were written on the board and their meanings were explained by the teacher and were copied by the students. No attention was paid to correct pronunciation or intonation.

Grammar and Translation

Special importance was given to translation and grammar. Such being the case, the verbs were conjugated and the definitions of the eight parts of speech were memorized. The students were required to know grammar and apply their knowledge of grammar in translating sentences from Persian to English or vice versa.

¹Evangelina C. Farhan, "Devices for Classroom Procedure," Modern Language Journal, November 1917, 2:68-77.

THE EXTENT OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN IRAN

After World War II English became the popular foreign language among students and replaced French which formerly was taught as a second language in the schools. About ninety per cent of the students in public junior and senior high schools take English as a foreign language. Taking a foreign language from grades seven to twelve is required; therefore, all junior and senior high school students are offered a modern foreign language as a part of the curriculum.

Many foreign language teachers are needed in the schools; and the number of experienced and qualified teachers is limited. In order to offer a foreign language and have a qualified teacher, the Ministry of Education has an arrangement by which the majority of students choose a modern foreign language in the seventh grade, and then the rest of the students accept that language. Because of this arrangement only one language is taught in many schools, and it is, at present time, usually English.

THE NEW TRENDS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN IRAN SINCE 1950'S

In the last two decades the new methods of teaching foreign languages have been widely used in high schools. Teachers all over the country have come to appreciate the advantages of employing new methods, and many of them agree that the results of new teaching techniques far excel those obtained previously. College students insist upon using new methods and have indeed achieved substantial success in their efforts to replace old, traditional methods with a new scientific approach.

The revolution started when many of young graduates returned home after they had done intensive studies abroad on the purpose and techniques of teaching foreign languages. Their interest in using their knowledge in their home country, added to the desire of young people to learn foreign languages, has created a desirable situation. The University of Teheran, the largest in Iran, pioneered in the use of modern techniques. Here are the major steps taken to improve teaching of foreign languages.

1. New courses were offered to acquaint future teachers with the principles of the new methods. The first course in using audio-visual materials in teaching was offered in 1952.

2. Summer classes were conducted to familiarize teachers with new methods. Various institutions cooperated to make the efforts fruitful. Educators from abroad were invited to conduct classes and to discuss new methods with educators, professors, teachers, and college students.

Practice teaching for future teachers was evaluated on the basis of students' ability to employ new techniques effectively. Several books were written in which specific ways to show the use of new methods under the circumstances prevailing in Iran.

The Direct Method

Since the 1950's the direct method, which is learning a language by hearing and speaking the language without translation, has taken the place of the traditional method which employed translation.

Although the aim of teaching foreign languages is still the attainment of reading ability, teachers of language have found that the use of the direct method enables students to respond to the commands and

contributes to understanding the language. From the first day only English is heard in the classroom. During the first few days single syllable pronunciation occupies the time, then the drill begins and commands are given by the teacher. Students are not supposed to pronounce the English words, but they obey the commands by putting them into action. Dictation begins when their ears are trained to comprehend simple statements which already have been used several times in the class. Since dictation builds up coordination of the work of the ear and the eye, therefore, it has become a regular feature of every day's work.

When students are trained in hearing commands and executing them, the teacher begins to help them to respond to questions. Questions are simple and about the things which are seen in the classroom. Sometimes the questions which are asked in the classroom are assigned as homework. Students write the questions as well as the answers. It is believed that homework which is composed of exercises such as answering the questions or conjugating verbs will improve students' abilities in translation and dictation.

The Use of Audio-Visual Materials

Although the time in foreign language classes in Iran is spent mostly on reading, writing, and grammar, new methods of teaching with the help of audio-visual materials are being employed. In some public schools the use of audio-visual materials has become a part of the language instruction.

Pictures and cartoons are used very often. Teachers as well as students gather pictures and cartoons for discussion purposes in the classroom.

The method of teaching by means of motion pictures is due to the great desire of students to know foreign culture. This desire has made the use of the motion picture so popular that the United States Information Service, through a loan system, has made available the use of motion pictures for the students in Tehran. The other audio-visual materials are not used in language instruction.

The main obstacle in the way of using audio-visual materials is financial. The cost of providing each school with modern teaching equipment is prohibitive and, at present time, is much beyond the financial ability of the Ministry of Education.

The second factor which prevents high schools in Iran from using all of the new techniques of teaching foreign languages is the size of the classes. Language classes range from forty to sixty and in some cases exceed seventy. Such large classes are mainly due to shortage of qualified teachers and school buildings as well as increasing number of students.

Because of the first and the most important obstacle, the lack of finance, adapting the aural-oral method with the help of the language laboratory has not been exercised. A language laboratory, according to the information gathered from the Educational Screen and Audio-Visual Guide, costs two hundred thirty dollars for one position, that is, for one listen-respond-record situation.

Wiseman reported that the cost of setting up each student position including the wiring and individual position share of the teacher's unit is approximately two hundred twenty-five dollars.

Holton said:

Language laboratories vary greatly in cost. This cost is essentially determined by the type of laboratory. A 30-position laboratory may cost as little as \$1,500 or as much as \$15,000.¹

If the Ministry of Education decided to install language laboratories in public schools, the cost would be much higher than it is in this country, because the shipment from abroad would add to the net price. Also the number of units needed for the increasing number of students would be beyond the financial ability of the Ministry of Education.

Adapting instructional television in Iran has not been considered possible for the simple reason that telecasting is in its infancy. In 1958, the first and the only telecasting system was organized. During the last six years people have developed a great interest in television program; therefore, it is possible that in the near future there might be opportunities for installation of educational television.

THE POSSIBILITY OF ADAPTING SOME OF THE AIMS AND NEW METHODS IN IRAN

As it was mentioned in previous parts of this report, the reason for the changing aims of language teaching in this country was directly the result of World War II. At that time the lack of comprehension and fluency by native Americans was revealed. Iran was not directly involved in World War II, and as a result did not notice the experiences of language handicap as did this country; therefore, the previous aim of teaching foreign languages, reading attainment, remained unchanged.

¹J. S. Holton, Sound Language Teaching, New York: University Press, 1961, p. 25.

There are few universities in Iran, and the number of students in these universities is limited. Every year thousands of high school graduates who can not enter the universities travel abroad for advanced study. These students, who have taken a foreign language for a period of six years, face very many problems in foreign countries. They are unable to understand people and to be understood.

The problem of students who are admitted to the universities in Iran is similar to those of students abroad. There are many foreign professors in the universities in Iran who lecture in their own languages. Students are not able to connect the meaning of one sentence to another, and as the result are not able to understand the lecture. These two problems faced by the students for advanced study could be solved if the aims of teaching foreign languages were changed.

The Ministry of Education which is located in the capital, Teheran, and is the centralized educational organization for the whole country, has never taken a positive step toward adapting the newly accepted aims of language teaching. The public schools which are under the direct control of the Ministry of Education do not have the authority to change the aims; therefore, the best place for introducing the new aims and methods of teaching foreign languages would be private schools. These are established by wealthy people and are supported by the influential families in Iran. Students who attend private schools pay high tuition fees, and ninety per cent of them travel abroad immediately after graduation from high schools. The administrators of these schools are the ones to take the first step in introducing the new aims. The advantages of spoken language and its superiority to reading knowledge with no fluency in the language must be brought out. When the language teachers and the

students of private schools accept the new aims a shift in the methods of teaching will have to be made. Fluency in a language cannot be obtained by reading the textbook and translating it word by word; the use of audio-visual materials must be employed and new techniques of teaching exercised.

The financial situation is considered the main obstacle in the way of using new techniques in foreign language classes. But through private schools this obstacle could be removed easily. As we have noticed in other parts of this report, the use of pictures, cartoons, slides, and motion pictures has been already introduced to students; but instruction of foreign languages by television, tape recorder, and especially language laboratories is completely unknown in Iran.

One of the steps which the administrators of private schools can take would be the introduction of television for foreign language instruction. There is only one telecasting system in Iran, yet these people could buy time on television for a language program. This program which could be arranged by the language teachers of private schools with cooperation of some foreign teachers would serve two purposes: first, it would introduce television as a valuable aid in teaching foreign languages, and second, through this program they could advertise their schools to the public and probably get more recognition. Since language students will be better informed by this means, they will appreciate the language programs and will be interested in instruction by television. There is a possibility that through the interest of students, facilities could be provided and teaching by telecasting could be adopted in all private schools in Iran. There is a hope that the Ministry of Education, after noticing the advantages of teaching spoken

language by television, would make an attempt to arrange a special budget for language teaching by this means.

Since no attention previously has been paid to pronunciation of foreign languages, tape recorders are not used in language classes at all. When fluency in a language becomes the aim of teaching, then the correct pronunciation of words and exact rhythm of sentences are essential in language classes. The use of tape recorders then becomes necessary. Again, the administrators of private schools can be pioneers in introducing tape recorders. Some tape recorders and tapes could be purchased by these schools. For a number of years the language teachers of these schools could use them in their own classes and employ the same method which has been used in this country since the 1940's. In order to introduce these devices to public schools, the administrators of private schools might arrange a loan system with or without charge. Since the price of a tape recorder ranges from 165 to 940 dollars according to the information gathered from Educational Screen and Audio-Visual Guide, providing one tape recorder for any school does not seem impossible. The administrators of public schools should accept the idea of teaching languages by tape recorders and try to get the approval of the Ministry of Education.

It will not be possible for private school administrators to introduce television and tape recorders and at the same time to install language laboratories. It will take a few years for teachers and students in schools and the public not in schools to accept the new devices. As we noticed even in this country some educators strongly opposed the new techniques of teaching foreign languages. But after some years when

people on the whole see the advantages of employing the new methods and disadvantages of the old methods then it will be the right time for installing language laboratories.

As was stated previously, a 30-position language laboratory costs as little as \$1,500 or as much as \$15,000. To introduce a language laboratory it is not necessary to have a complete and expensive one. By installing an inexpensive language laboratory in a private school as a model, the advantages and usefulness of it in teaching the spoken language will be introduced to educators as well as students and public. Instead of using individual booths for a certain number of students, and in order to provide opportunities for all students, booths can be used by students for a short time. When these students and the teachers of private schools are convinced of the value of language laboratories in training the ear to comprehend the language, then they can arrange certain hours that the students of public schools could use the language laboratories and become acquainted with its advantages. This could be considered as a simple way of introducing a language laboratory to the people in Iran.

In this report aims and methods of teaching foreign languages in America prior to the 1940's were investigated. This was followed by a discussion of the reasons for changing the aims and methods to those in present use. Scope of application of new methods in the United States and some of the expected results were given a full consideration. The aims and methods of teaching English as a foreign language in Iran were studied in a parallel manner. Finally, since some of the teaching techniques used in this country are not practically applicable in Iran under present circumstances, certain suggestions were presented to make these techniques suitable for application in Iranian schools.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE AIMS AND METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN
LANGUAGES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WHICH COULD BE
APPLIED TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN IRAN

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The purpose of this study was to make an investigation of the aims and methods of teaching foreign languages in the United States of America which could be applied to teaching English as a foreign language in Iran.

Prior to World War II, the main objectives in teaching foreign languages in America were to develop the student's ability to read, write, and translate foreign words and sentences. No effort was made on the part of the language teachers to enable students to comprehend and speak the language being taught. Methods used in teaching foreign languages were designed to achieve these objectives. The greatest portion of class hours was devoted to reading from the textbook and dictating words and sentences.

World War II revealed the deficiency of the objectives and the inefficiency of the methods. Young American soldiers who had taken foreign languages in high schools found themselves unable to communicate with foreigners. The United States Government and Army were concerned about this problem. The Army established its own school with the new objective which was to enable students to comprehend and speak the language being taught. Consequently, new goals were set and new methods were developed throughout the country. At the present time, emphasis is on oral communication, and methods are evaluated according to their effectiveness in developing a student's ability to communicate in a foreign language.

Extensive research made in the new techniques of teaching foreign languages showed that audio-visual materials played an indispensable part in achieving the new aims. The use of picture, cartoon, slides, and motion pictures helped teachers to eliminate abstract verbalism to a great extent. Yet, tape recorders and language laboratories are

now considered to be the most valuable teaching devices. However, these devices are not used in all English classes in Iran. Aims and methods of teaching foreign languages in the schools of Iran prior to the 1950's were similar to those in the United States prior to the 1940's. Reading attainment was the main purpose of teaching languages. In the last two decades, however, the new methods of teaching foreign languages have been used in some high schools. The reason was that many young graduates returned home after they had done intensive studies abroad on the purpose and techniques of teaching foreign languages. The direct method of teaching foreign languages is followed somewhat closely in schools. The use of pictures, cartoons, slides, and motion pictures has become popular among teachers. Instruction by tape recorders, televisions and language laboratories, has not been introduced in public schools because of insufficient funds of the Ministry of Education.

Suggestions for the adaptation of these valuable devices in teaching foreign languages have been made to the administrators of private schools. These suggestions were as follows:

1. The purchase of time on the television in order to introduce the television methods of language instruction.
2. The purchase of tapes and tape recorders to introduce the correct English pronunciation and intonation in private schools.
3. The installation of an inexpensive language laboratory as a model, making it available to small groups of students at a time.